**Mark 10:46-52 24/10/21**

Youtube Video Link: <https://youtu.be/kmeSrB_LZMA>

There is physical blindness and then there is spiritual blindness. As we read through the gospel according to Mark, we constantly hear about the spiritual blindness of those who were following Jesus. Jesus has told them that he must suffer and die. At first, they didn’t see what Jesus meant and when they did finally see, Peter shows his blindness by rebuking Jesus. They argued about who was the greatest and they didn’t see that in the kingdom of God the first must be last. They were amazed when Jesus told them how hard it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God and they did not see the hope all people have because, even though it is impossible for human beings, with God all things are possible.

The spiritual blindness continued as James and John ask to be seated at the right and left of Jesus in his glory. They wanted glory and power but couldn’t see that those who are greatest in the kingdom of God must be slaves of all.

Spiritual blindness. We all have it don’t we. Even if we have faith in Jesus, we still don’t see clearly. Even Paul the great apostle knew that this side of death none of us have spiritual clarity. He says that now we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12), like looking in a foggy bathroom mirror after a hot shower. We only see dimly what God’s love is like, we only see dimly what God’s grace and forgiveness is like, we only see dimly the hope we have in the death and resurrection of Christ. We only see dimly how to love God and our neighbours.

As they follow Jesus, the spiritually blind disciples and crowds pass by a beggar, probably not even noticing him, blind to his desperate situation.

The beggar on the side of the road may have been physically blind but he certainly had spiritual sight. He could see who Jesus was, as he shouted out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47). Son of David is a title for the Messiah. The blind beggar had enough spiritual insight to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. Trusting that Jesus would have mercy on him, the blind man continued to shout out to get his attention.

Unfortunately, those who were following Jesus once again show their spiritual blindness. They hear the blind man shouting and they tell him to be quiet. They seem to be blind to the fact that Jesus in one of his first sermons said, he had been anointed *“to proclaim good news to the poor… to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free”* (Luke 4:18-19).

Instead of seeing a child of God in need, they see a sinner. We can guess what is going through their minds because there was another time when the disciples saw and blind man and they asked Jesus, *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* (John 9:2). Instead of looking at the blind man with love and compassion they judge the blind man to be a sinner, deserving of his condition. Instead of encouraging the blind man and bringing him to Jesus, they rebuke him and try to shut him up as if he is not worthy of mercy.

What would you do if you needed help? I wonder how often we listen to the voices that tell us to be quiet. “Be quite because you have done bad things and you don’t deserve God’s help.” “Be quiet because it is your own fault your life is a mess.” “Be quite because your problem isn’t important enough to bother God with.” “Be quite because your faith isn’t good enough, strong enough, certain enough.” Would you listen, do you listen to the voices that tell you to be quiet and not ask God for help?

The blind man did not listen. He had faith in Jesus’ compassion and power and kept shouting out at the top of his voice despite everyone telling him to be quiet. He shouted over the noise of the crowd until Jesus heard him. Jesus stopped, he loves this blind man, he has compassion on this blind man, and he asks his disciples to call the man over. This man is important, so important we are given his name, it is Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus. Bartimaeus is noticed by Jesus the Son of David and Son of God.

At last, the disciples did what disciples of Jesus are called to do. They went to the blind man and encouraged him to go to Jesus, saying, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” That is what Jesus’ disciples are called to do. That is what we are called to do. Not to judge and condemn and turn people away from Jesus, but to encourage them by telling them that Jesus wants to help them. “Cheer up, Jesus hears you.” “Cheer up Jesus wants you to go to him.” “Cheer up Jesus wants to help you.” “Cheer up Jesus has died for you, rose for you and lives forever for you.”

 The blind man is so convinced Jesus will help him that he throws his cloak aside, his sole possession. The item that kept him warm and was probably spread out in front of him to catch the coins people threw to him as he begged. Bartimaeus is expecting more than a healing, he is expecting a new life. When Jesus asks what he wants he says, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Jesus says, “Go your faith has healed you”, and he receives his sight. Even though Jesus tells him to go, he doesn’t leave Jesus. Instead, he follows Jesus. He hasn’t only been physically healed he has been healed spiritually. He has physical as well as spiritual sight as he becomes a disciple and follows Jesus to Jerusalem and to the cross. Into a new life, a full life, walking the way of Jesus the son of David, the Son of God, the Messiah.

**Amen.**

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz